



School Improvement Council Assistance

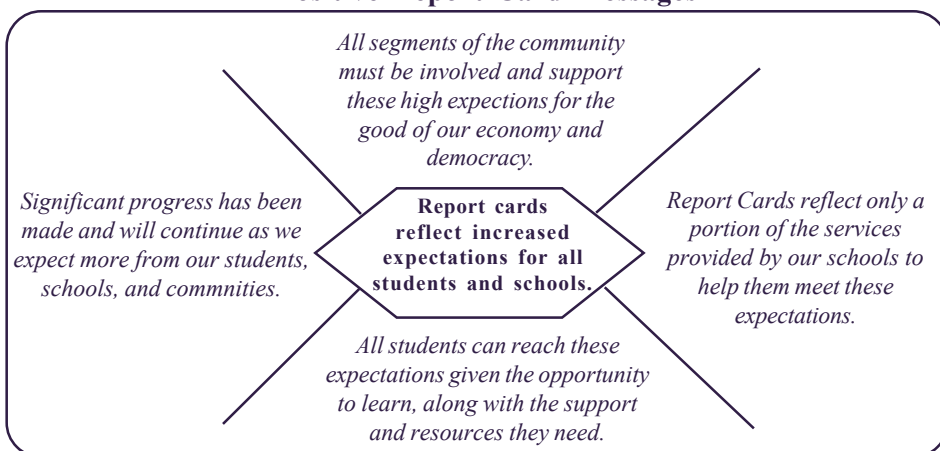
Fall 2001

What Will the Report Card Say About Your School? What Will Your School Say About the Report Card?

As the SICA NEWS goes to press the release date of the first School Report Card has been delayed until early December. Now is the time for Councils to craft their message to the community about the Report Card and prepare for the questions and concerns its release may generate.

The Report Card is a reflection of increased expectations for our students and our schools. It is important to use the Report Card as a means for school improvement, not for punishment or blame. This first Report Card will provide a baseline measurement of your school's progress in implementing the Education Accountability Act (EAA). Use it as an opportunity for serious examination, reflection, celebration, and as a springboard for positive change. The message the report card brings is one of hope and progress as our state focuses its energy and resources on the education of our children. Use affirming statements as you discuss the report card with the greater school community.

Positive Report Card Messages



Review and Understand the Report Card

Page two of the Report Card will tell you the **Performance Level** of your school based on the PACT (Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test) scores in grades 3-8 only. The high school PACT exit exam will not be administered until 2004, so this year the high school's Performance Level will come from the percentage of students passing the current exit exam and the percentage of students who are eligible for the state's LIFE scholarship at four-year institutions. Data for the high school exit exam could not be compiled in time for the planned November release date, so the report cards were delayed until December. Schools with only K-2 will be measured using a variety of factors including, but not limited to, student attendance, parent involvement, and pupil-teacher ratios.

Your school will also receive an **Improvement Rate**, which evaluates the school's progress as compared to the previous year. The **School Grade**, which appears on the front of the Report Card, is a composite of both the Performance Level and the Improvement Rate. A mathematical formula is used to assign weights and values to how the school met the various rating criteria and determine its score. The range of scores and grades are: 3.4 and above = Excellent; 3.0 – 3.3 = Good; 2.6 – 2.9 = Average; 2.2 – 2.5 = Below Average; 2.2 and below = Unsatisfactory. Under the EAA, the state is obliged to provide assistance for schools scoring Unsatisfactory.

(see **Report Card** pg. 4)

Student SIC Members Named to State Board

Four students serving on School Improvement Councils (SICs) have been named to the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) of the South Carolina Center for Safe Schools. Derek McQuiston, Stratford High School in Charleston; Khalid Barr, A. C. Flora High School in Columbia; Amy Patel, Myrtle Beach High School; and Shanara Sims, Buford High School in Lancaster have all demonstrated leadership skills as members of their SICs. Now they will have the unique opportunity to serve on a statewide advisory board made up completely of youth. "This is the only advisory board of its kind in the state," said Dr. Susan Alexander, director of the Center and YAB advisor. "These young people will serve as a resource for policy and program development relating to youth safety in South Carolina," she explained.



Youth Advisory Board members participate in a teambuilding exercise

"We are very excited to have their input at the Center."

The Center for Safe Schools, located at the State Department of Education, was created in March of this year in response to a report from the Governor's Safe Schools Task Force.

(see **Student SIC Members** pg. 2)

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Student SIC Members *(continued from pg. 1)*

The Center advises policymakers on youth violence issues and serves as a clearinghouse of information and materials related to prevention of violence and substance abuse. The Safe Schools Task Force recognized the value of involving youth in the creation of safe schools policy and recommended that a Youth Advisory Board be convened.

The YAB is a diverse group of 14 middle and high school students from all regions of South Carolina nominated by their school principals because of their leadership potential. School Improvement Council Assistance Director of Program Services, Cassie Barber, serves as an adult advisor to the YAB. "I am very impressed with how smart, creative, aware, and committed our youth are," said Ms. Barber. "They are funny and charming as well – qualities which will help them put their great ideas to work in their communities," she added.



Youth Advisory Board members Shanara Sims, Derek McQuiston, Amy Patel and Khalid Barr; with adult advisor, Cassie Barber, center

YAB members and their adult advisors participated in a Prudential Youth Leadership Institute (PYLI) training held at the White Oak Conference Center in Winnsboro. Led by Robert Carlton, Director of Youth Development at the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, this intense training laid the groundwork for the development of the YAB's objectives for this year – and gave the Board members skills that will serve them for a lifetime. Mr. Carlton, also a YAB advisor, believes this leadership training "helps young people and their communities address the broader developmental needs of youth and the contributions they can make rather than focusing solely on youth problems."

Objectives identified for the coming year include:

- Creation of a Recommendation Document
- Gathering and Compiling Data
- Expansion of the Youth Leadership Concept
- Provide Input into Prevention Strategies

Derek McQuiston was elected as one of the Board's three co-chairs. "This was an awesome training," said McQuiston. "I really enjoyed meeting these people and the activities taught me that I can accomplish a lot more in a group than by myself. And I never realized how many resources are out there for schools."

The full YAB will meet twice more this school year and will stay in touch by email. YAB members will invite their schools to host a PYLI training and give others the opportunity to gain the skills they now possess. Other members of the YAB include: Louis Veney, Cainhoy Middle School; Katy Long, Crayton Middle School; Erin Pruitt, Pendleton High School; Tramier Brown, H.G. Sanders Middle School; John Michalski, Dent Middle School; Lakindra Mood, Spartanburg High School; Jessica Zeller, Lugoff Elgin High School; Mark Richard, Georgetown High School; Mike Steiniger, Battery Creek High School; and Brooke Cherry, J.B. Beck Middle School. To learn more, visit www.myschools.com/offices/ssys/safe_schools/scss/.

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SICA NEWS... is an award winning publication of School Improvement Council Assistance, USC College of Education, Wardlaw Bldg., Room 001, Columbia, SC 29208. Circulation 16,500. Comments, ideas, questions and articles are welcome. Contact Cassie Barber, Editor, at:

1-800-868-2232
803-777-7658

sica@gwm.sc.edu

www.ed.sc.edu/sica/sica.html

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The Role of The School Improvement Council in Teacher Education

Great Ideas for Helping Your School “Grow Its Own Teachers”

By Dr. Jane Zenger

In South Carolina, as in other parts of the country, we are faced with a growing teacher shortage. In response to this national need, Title II federal funds are flowing into teacher education programs and local school districts in an attempt to analyze current policy, improve teacher education programs, and investigate innovative teacher recruitment strategies. One such study is being conducted in South Carolina through a multi-million dollar five year project to explore strategies to enhance teacher education courses, the supervision and evaluation of interns, and the mentoring of new teachers.

The South Carolina Teacher Quality Partners project involves four higher education institutions: the University of South Carolina (Columbia Campus), Winthrop University, Benedict College, and Furman University. The major focus involves the strengthening of teacher education programs, especially during the student teaching and/or internship phases of a pre-service program. Naturally, colleges of education are more apt to place interns in healthy schools where students learn through inquiry, teachers use excellent teaching strategies, and where the teaching personnel and administration are stable from year to year.

One of the best indicators of a healthy school environment surrounds the recruitment and retention of new teachers. SICs can play an important role by placing a few simple activities on their yearly agenda.

1. Find out if your school is part of a formal university-school partnership such as a PDS (Professional Development School Network). If so, invite someone in to discuss how the PDS works.
2. Work with other school organizations to welcome, support, and encourage new and aspiring teachers.
3. Support and honor coaching/mentor teachers who supervise student-teaching interns.
4. Encourage community and parental support to help new teachers.
5. Introduce student teachers at SIC programs.
6. Encourage and support teacher cadet programs in high schools and develop scholarships for academically gifted students choosing teaching as a profession.

Many schools and districts across the country consider having interns as an opportunity to “grow their own teachers.” Student teachers are called “junior faculty” and begin the year co-teaching with the classroom teacher.

Principals can observe these teachers-in-training and keep a file of student teachers for future teacher vacancies.

School Improvement Councils can help bring quality teachers into a school and community by providing supportive environments to help new teachers gain the skills and confidence to make it through the first several years.

For more information on the University of South Carolina Teacher Quality Partnership visit the website at <http://TQC.ed.sc.edu>, or contact the U.S.C. Teacher Quality Project at 803-777-6239.

Dr. Zenger is on the faculty in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina and directs the Teacher Quality Partner Project.



Coaching teacher Saudah Collins, Horrell Hill ES left, and USC Intern Catherine Howard.

FYI...

Family-Friendly Schools to Receive Awards

South Carolina schools that do an excellent job of “laying out the red carpet” for visitors will soon be recognized for their efforts. The new Red Carpet Schools program from the SC Department of Education will provide recognition for schools with outstanding family-friendly environments.

“A family-friendly school has an attractive campus – regardless of the age of the facility – as well as a staff that is helpful to visitors,” said State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum. “It’s an overall positive feeling you get from the moment you drive into the parking lot.”

All SC public schools are eligible to receive the awards, the first of which will be announced this spring. Schools must complete a four-page application outlining their customer service programs and how they are evaluated. For an application and program guidelines visit www.myscschools.com.

Last Chance to Join NNPS for FREE!

Over the last five years the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns-Hopkins University has grown to include over 1500 schools, 150 school districts, 19 state departments of education, and 60 organization/university partners. NNPS has provided resources and training free of charge and conducted research to support and promote best practices in family and community involvement. SICA and the SC Department of Education are promoting membership in the organization for schools and districts to assist them in using family and community involvement to boost student achievement.

In order to maintain the high quality of services offered, NNPS will begin to charge for membership and workshops beginning January 2, 2002. New member fees will be \$100 per school and \$200 per district, state department, or organization. All NNPS members can avoid a renewal fee by completing update data by June 30 each year. This data provides research and evaluation information for NNPS. Now is the time to join NNPS and make parent involvement a reality in your school. Contact: (410) 516-8818 or www.partnershipschools.com.

SICA Action Timeline**NOVEMBER**

- 15 SIC membership information sent by districts to SICA
- 19-23 Education Week
- Complete SIC organization to monitor school improvement plan
- Review information already available that will appear on the Report Card
- Review PACT data, identify trends, disaggregate by student groups
- Analyze teacher and student survey results returned by SDE
- Review data sent by principal to SDE for Report Card
- Assist with all opportunities school and district sponsor to discuss the Report Card with parents and the community
- Participate in interview with External Review Team [ERT], *only in schools identified by SDE requiring review*

DECEMBER

- School Report Cards distributed
- Be prepared to explain what the information on the Report Card means
- Assist school with opportunities to discuss Report Card with parents
- Organize SIC members in preparation to write the "Report to the Parents"
- Review report and recommendations prepared by ERT if school was visited

JANUARY

- Continue to analyze test scores, surveys, and facts about the school
- Prepare outline of information to be included in the "Report to the Parents"
- Design the format, compile the information, and write the "Report to the Parents"
- Continue to assist school in efforts to discuss the Report Card implications with parents and the community
- Receive reports from membership about the progress to implement strategies in the school improvement plan
- Participate in revision of the school improvement plan when final recommendations of the ERT are received
- Plan the distribution of the "Report to the Parents", including community locations

DATES to Remember: 2001-2002

January 31 – SIC State Meeting via SCETV

February 1 – Deadline to distribute Report to the Parents written by SIC

February – SIC to assist in revision of School Improvement/Renewal Plans for schools rated Unsatisfactory on the School Report Card

March 2 – Annual SIC Conference, Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, Columbia

May 2 – SIC State Meeting via SCETV

May-June – Assist in writing narrative for School Report Card

Report Card (continued from pg. 1)

Also on page two you will find information that compares your school to others with a similar student body. It also contains statistics on how students in your school performed on the PACT broken down by gender, ethnic group, disabilities, and free and reduced lunch status. This information can help you determine such things as whether girls are doing as well in math as boys in your school and if your school's overall math scores compare favorably with similar schools.

Page three of the Report Card lists a variety of indicators for school performance including such things as student-teacher ratio, attendance, dollars spent per pupil, teacher salaries and much more. While these indicators are not computed directly into your School Grade, it is widely recognized that each indicator plays an important role in the effectiveness of the school and ultimately affects test scores, which are the only criteria for the Performance Level rating. For instance, a teacher who is certified to teach a particular subject is likely to do a better job than one who is not, and a student who attends school regularly is more likely to achieve than one who does not. The list of indicators creates a **School Profile**, which paints a picture of the school climate and provides the framework in which academic achievement takes place.

Page four contains the narrative about your school written by the principal and the SIC. You will also find survey results from teachers and students about their perceptions of the climate in the school. A parent survey will be added next year.

Use the Report Card as a Tool for Improvement

Take some time to assess and absorb this incredible document, which gives the school community more information about the school than they've probably ever seen in one place before. Some of the information will generate pride; some will generate concern. Council members have a duty to compare the report card with the school improvement plan to see where the plan has achieved its goals and where changes are indicated to improve the school's grade. If the school is rated Unsatisfactory the School Improvement Council is required by law to review and adjust the school's plan accordingly.

Make this year's **Report to the Parents** (due February 1) the best your school has ever produced. This report is your opportunity to "show off" your school to the community. Describe how your school has progressed in implementing your school plan, how areas of need are being addressed and goals achieved. (Visit www.ed.sc.edu/sica/sica.html for an example.)

Create opportunities for parents and community members to gather and learn about information included on the Report Card such as PACT tests, standards and curriculum, and the indicators for school improvement in your School Profile and how they affect student achievement. Help them understand how issues like funding, teacher shortages, new standards, or the number of children with English as their second language affects your school and its Report Card grade. Engage as many people as possible in the life of your students and your school. Solicit their help to meet your challenges. Invite them to share your celebrations. In return you will receive new resources, strong advocates, and an improved school climate.

Principals and District Public Information Officers who attended one of a series of workshops last summer received a *School and District Report Card Communications Tool Kit* developed and distributed by the Education Oversight Committee. This tool kit can be invaluable in helping to develop "key messages" about your school and gives good advice on how to get those messages to the greater school community.

An informed SIC is essential to effective leadership for improvements. Get prepared as a Council; then prepare others and enlist their help to improve!

Mark Your Calendar!



16th Annual SIC Conference

"The New American Family and the School"

Saturday, March 2, 2002

Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, Columbia, SC

We borrowed the theme of this year's conference, *"The New American Family and the School"*, from a book written by keynote speaker, Dr. Howard Johnston. A dynamic speaker who uses humor and pathos to bring home his "out of the box" ideas for improving education, Dr. Johnston is Professor of Secondary Education at the University of South Florida and a nationally recognized expert on middle schools.

Co-sponsored by Communities in Schools-SC, the conference will take a look at the changing nature of the American family and how schools respond to those changes. School policy and practices can encourage or interfere with family participation and student success. You will take home practical ideas for ways your school can work with families to foster achievement and productive behavior.



Dr. Howard Johnston

Conference attendees can choose from more than a dozen breakout sessions and visit a variety of exhibits. Additional conference speakers are being confirmed now. Detailed registration information will be mailed to all Council members in January. So mark your calendar – you won't want to miss this one!



Child Nutrition Conference

"Changing the Scene in Child Nutrition Environments"

Tuesday, December 11 OR Wednesday, December 12, 2001

South Carolina Archives and History Center, Columbia, SC

According to the Office of School Food Services and Nutrition, SC Department of Education, many of our children are receiving an "F" in healthy eating. This conference will bring a wide variety of community stakeholders together to examine the importance of healthy eating, the consequences of poor nutrition habits and the role of schools and childcare facilities in improving nutritional health. Attend one day only. Register by November 28. Fee: \$10. (includes lunch) Contact: Donna Russell, (803) 734-9819 or drussell@sde.state.sc.us



Communities in Schools - SC Annual Meeting

"Linking Community Treasures"

Tuesday, December 11, 2001

Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, Columbia, SC

Featured speakers are former US Department of Education Secretary Richard Riley and Robert E. Staton, SC Education Oversight Committee. Outstanding Partners, volunteers, and programs will be recognized. Fee: \$15 (includes lunch) Register by November 30, 2001. Contact: Ziphia Shepard, (803) 254-5520.



School Improvement Council members know what is happening in the local schools and have valuable information to share with their elected officials. It's important for citizens concerned about education to familiarize themselves with the laws, policies and procedures that affect schools on the local, state, and national levels. South Carolina is facing serious budget cuts so it is more important than ever that citizens understand how their tax dollars for education are being spent.

Now is the time to learn about your elected officials and get involved in your government. First, make sure you are registered to vote. Call your county voter registration commission if you need to register. Next, familiarize yourself with the governing bodies that make decisions affecting education. Look on the back of your voter registration card to find your district numbers or call your county voter registration office. They can tell you the names of local, state, and national elected officials. Information on elected officials and access to the internet can be found at your local public library and school.

Local - Get to know your local school board. They make important decisions about the inner workings of the school district and how tax dollars are allocated for your school. School Board meetings are open to the public. Attend a few meetings, hear issues being brought to the table and introduce yourself to the school board members. Do the same with your county or city council.

State - On the internet visit the SC Statehouse Network at www.scstatehouse.net. There you will find information listed alphabetically and by district on your senator and representative, your district legislative delegation, and much, much more. Legislative Information Services will give you the same information by phone (800) 922-1539 or (803) 734-2060. The legislative session begins January 8 with sessions and committee meetings open to the public.

National - The Library of Congress has a great site where you can access a great deal of information about the United States Congress. Visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> to find directories, bills, committees and more. US Senators and Representatives maintain offices in Washington, DC and in their home states. Look in the blue pages of your phone book for contact information.

The next issue of the SICA NEWS will feature resources to help you stay informed about education issues in South Carolina.

SICA Board of Trustees Welcomes New Members and Elects Officers

Seven new Board members representing various regions of the state were welcomed during the fall meeting of the School Improvement Council *Assistance* Board of Trustees.

SICA is an independent, non-regulatory agency whose mission is to help South Carolina's School Improvement Councils work effectively to create and sustain a continuous school improvement process. The SICA Board of Trustees are key contributors in accomplishing this mission and the staff truly appreciate their commitment to improving education for all of South Carolina's children. New Board members include:



Patty Patterson, Chief of Police for the City of Sumter.



Gail Phillips, from Aiken, a long-time education advocate with leadership experience in the SC PTA



Dr. Bruce Field, Executive Director of the Office of School-University Partnerships at the University of South Carolina in Columbia



Candy Leggett, retired banker from Sumter, also serves on the Can We Talk? statewide steering committee.



Orlando Gonzalez, lives in Columbia and is the Health Coordinator for the SC Hispanic Outreach.



Nell Stewart, Greenville businesswoman, is a respected community and education activist.



Jessie Varnado White, Area Director of the Greenwood Social Security Administration



Patrick Cobb, Director of Communications for the SC Chapter of the ARRP in Columbia

The Board of Trustees elected Robert Zuercher of Myrtle Beach as Board Chair and Betty Gregory of Columbia was elected Vice Chair. Other Board members continuing their terms of service include: Joel Brockman, Greenville; Richard Mock, Charleston; Tom Richardson, Moncks Corner; Imogene Steele, Lancaster; and Mamie Templeton, Spartanburg. To learn more about the SICA Board, visit www.ed.sc.edu/sica/sica.html.